

Remarks

In the Office Action dated November 1, 2006, the Examiner objected to the specification and to claims 6, 23 and 37 and rejected claims 1, 2, 5-13, 23-31, 33-35 and 37-41 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,667,023 to Harrell et al. ("Harrell").

Applicant has amended claims 1, 6, 23, 34 and 37 to correct informalities and to further distinguish over Harrell and has canceled claims 2, 24 and 25. Applicant respectfully submits that the amendments do not add new matter and their entry is respectfully requested.

Objections to the Specification

Applicant has amended the specification to reflect that application serial number 10/196,635 is now abandoned and that application serial number 10/342,454 has now issued as United States Patent No. 6,766,862. Applicant respectfully submits that this amendment overcomes the Examiner's objection.

Objections to the Claims

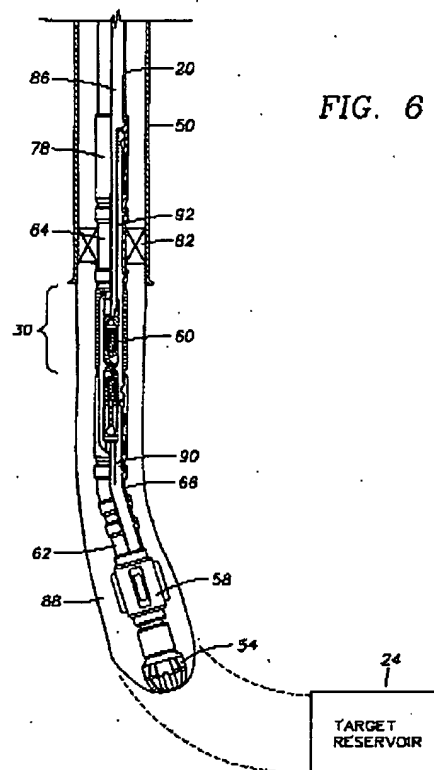
The Examiner has objected to claims 6, 23 and 37 on the grounds that they employ the term "gravel packing apparatus" without antecedent basis. Applicant has amended the claims to replace the term "gravel packing apparatus" with the term "gravel

packing assembly" as suggested by the Examiner. Applicant respectfully submits that these amendments have fully addressed the Examiner's objections to claims 6, 23 and 37.

The Harrell Reference

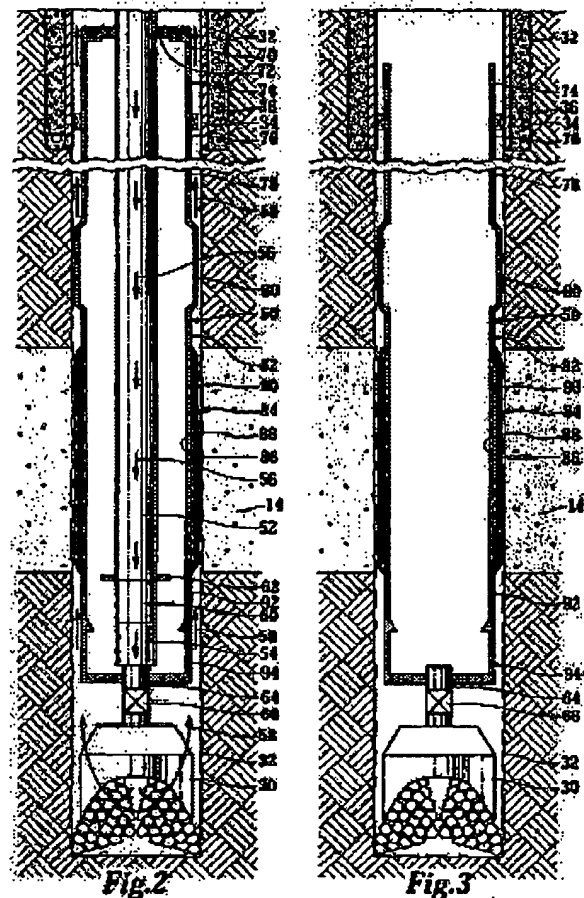
Harrell discloses a method and apparatus for drilling and completing a bore hole. The method comprises positioning a work string in the well, with a bottom hole assembly attached. The bottom hole assembly can include a drill bit, a drilling motor, orientation instrumentation, and a completion assembly. A fluid is circulated to drive the drill bit to drill the well to a target formation. Then, the completion assembly is used to produce fluids from the formation. Gravel packing can also be performed with the bottom hole assembly.

Figure 6 of Harrell is disclosed to the right. In this figure, a small diameter rotor/stator assembly 60 is positioned within a completion assembly 30. A sealing string 92 is attached to the rotor/stator assembly 60 and then sealed into a connector sub 78. A drive shaft 90



extends from the rotor/stator assembly 60 to a flex joint contained within an adjustable kick off sub 66. In operation, the operator circulates drilling fluid down an internal bore 86 of a work string 20 and through the rotor/stator assembly 60. Rotation is imparted to drill bit 54 via the flex joint and the drive shaft 90. A sealing string 92 assures that the drilling fluid does not exit the bottom hole assembly 26 through the completion assembly 30. A seal is provided at the lower end of the rotor/stator assembly 60, to prevent drilling fluid backflow up around the rotor/stator assembly 60. Harrell further discloses that the well drilled using the apparatus of Figure 6 may be gravel packed once the completion assembly is located within the target reservoir.

Figures 2 and 3 of the present disclosure are shown to the right, illustrating the relationship of the drill string 52, sand control screen assembly 84 and drill bit 30 both during and after drilling. Upon a review of the pending claims in



light of Harrell, it is clear that Harrell fails to disclose certain aspects of the invention as disclosed and claimed in the present application. In particular, Harrell fails to disclose a completion assembly disposed around a section of the drill string. Further, Harrell does not disclose any structure or method employing a drill string extending from the drill bit to the surface or rotatably coupling the completion assembly to the drill string to prevent torque transfer therebetween as recited, for example, in claim 8. Finally, Harrell does not disclose disconnecting the drill string from the drill bit and removing it from the wellbore after drilling.

The written description of Harrell describes work string 20 (shown in Figure 6 above) in some places as a "drill string." Applicant interprets the Examiner's comments as reading "work string 20" of Harrell on the "drill string" recited in the pending claims. If "work string 20" of Harrell is interpreted as the "drill string" recited in the present claims, then Harrell cannot be interpreted to anticipate the present claims, as it is clear that the "completion assembly 30" of Harrell is disposed *downhole of*, rather than *around* "work string 20." Accordingly, Harrell does not disclose "positioning a completion assembly around a section of the drill string."

Alternately, if the Examiner takes the position that the "drill string" recited in the present claims is some other structure, the Examiner must show that the structure in question:

Has a completion assembly disposed around it;

Has a drill bit disposed on the end of it;

Is advanced from the surface; and

Is removed from the wellbore after drilling.

Upon a review of the Harrell reference, Applicant respectfully submits that no single structure meeting these limitations can be found within Harrell. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Harrell cannot be read to anticipate the pending claims.

Fee Statement

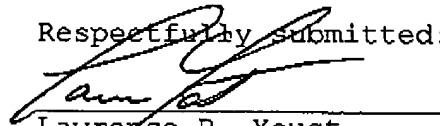
Applicant has enclosed herewith a petition and fee for a one-month extension of time. The number of independent claims and the total number of claims is reduced by way of the present Response. Applicant believes no additional fees are due in conjunction with the filing of this Response. If additional fees are due, however, please debit our deposit account, Account No. 03-1130.

Conclusion

Applicants have made a diligent effort to advance the prosecution of this application by pointing out the manner in which the claims are not multiplicative and are allowable over the cited art. An early Notice of Allowance of claims 1, 5-13, 23, 25-31, 33-34 and 37-47 is, therefore, respectfully solicited.

Dated this 1st day of March, 2006.

Respectfully submitted:



Lawrence R. Youst
Reg. No. 38,795
Danamraj & Youst, P.C.
Premier Place, Suite 1450
5910 North Central Expressway
Dallas, Texas 75206
Tel 214.363.4266
Fax 214.363.8177